



VIRTUAL
**2020 NATIONAL
RYAN WHITE
CONFERENCE ON
HIV CARE & TREATMENT**

Responding to Employment Needs of People with HIV: Addressing Disparities, Improving Well-being, and Ending the Epidemic

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A Pathway to Endependence:

A Pilot Program at the
University of Virginia Department of Medicine Infectious Disease Clinic

Sylvester Askins, Jr.
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Pilot for PWH on SSA Disability



- This program is funded through Ryan White Part B under Psychosocial Support Services
- It is a pilot program designed to help PWH on SSA Disability who want to begin their journey to “Endependence” from entitlement programs
- The program provides benefits counseling to help these individuals as they begin to look at moving towards economic stability

Access to Needed Information



- This benefits counseling allows PWH to make informed decisions about their economic futures
- Since living with HIV is not in itself considered a disability by Social Security, some PWH are looking at returning to work for the first time in many years if Continuing Disability Reviews result in loss of benefits
- Our program does not provide employment services, however, it provides PWH the information they need to explore how working will effect their SSA disability benefits

Goal: Well-Informed Decisions



- Benefits Counseling is a crucial component for PWH who wish to take charge of their economic futures
- The more PWH know how their future plans will effect their disability benefits the more able they are to make well-informed decisions
- The program also assists PWH make realistic, timely, and attainable decisions about their futures
- PWH who are seeking work are referred to our local partners to assist them with attaining their employment goals

Benefits Counseling is Key



- The HIV landscape is changing quickly
- It's important that PWH have access to all the resources and information possible to make the best decisions about their future
- The benefits counseling offered through the Pathway to Endependence program is a much need first step towards becoming equipped to make well-informed decisions considering and navigating self-chosen changes for a brighter and more stable economic future for PWH

GMHC: Workforce Development Programs

April Watkins, MPA
Managing Director of Workforce Development
GMHC

GMHC - 35 Years of Service



- GMHC provides a myriad of services to the HIV/AIDS community and has done so for over 35 years, in addition to being first in the fight.
- Over the years GMHC's programs have grown exponentially and has incorporated services that benefit high risk negatives, youths, and the Trans community.
- GMHC branded a One Stop model, that has allowed us to provide a diverse menu of services all in the same location.
- Some of these services are enhanced by Ryan White support amongst others.

GMHC's One-Stop Services



GMHC offers:

- HIV & STI testing/counseling
- Referrals to care along with information on PREP/PEP
- Congregate meals, pantry and nutrition counseling
- Legal advocacy
- Mental health and substance use services
- Housing
- Financial management
- Intensive case management
- Vocational and employment services

GMHC's Evolving Services



As GMHC's consumer needs have evolved, new offerings have been added including research & education as well as a long-term survivor's initiative.

GMHC began employment services in 2003 and has fostered great relationships as well a great reputation for placing and retaining employment over the years, with a low recidivism rate and a high hourly wage percentile.

Services offered in our workforce development department are deemed essential, as we know that employment is a prevention model. Over the years, we have seen an increase in employment and a decrease in risk behaviors among participants when they became employed.

GMHC's Employment Services



- GMHC's employment services include the following:
- Comprehensive Employment Needs Assessment
- Transitional Benefits Counseling
- Resumes, Cover letters, Thank You Letters, Reference Guidance
- Financial Coaching
- Job Readiness Workshops
- Microsoft Office Specialist Certifications / Digital Literacy
- Dress for Success Clothing Closet
- Employment and Retention services

Service Models Pre-COVID

- All services were face-to-face
- Orientations conducted every Monday at 11AM with the option of enrolling and completing an assessment
- Full-service exploration and Career Plan development. Gathering relevant documents and creating resumes and referrals to financial coaching and transitional benefits counseling.
- Referrals to Microsoft Office Specialist trainings and Job Development staff to begin employment assistance
- Provide proof of employment and Metro card pick as part of retention services

GMHC's Employment Services During COVID



Service Models During COVID

- All services are offered online
- Fillable documents and PowerPoint presentations provide information on all services activities and eligibility requirements
- Orientation and assessments can be accessed any time of the day.
- Created alerts to staff when someone has completed the assessment application
- Potential client is contacted to complete a Career Plan
- Access to online workshops and trainings, and job readiness activities
- Retention services at convenient locations for access to Metro cards

Addressing Employment Needs of People Living with HIV: Utilizing Resources in Your Community

Mark Misrok, MS Ed
Executive Director
National Working Positive Coalition

American Job Centers



American Job Centers are local/regional hubs of workforce development services and resources:

- Jobseekers do not have to disclose HIV status, disability or health condition
- Nation-wide system, largely funded by the U.S. Dept. of Labor, developed to bring together local employment and training services that work with all people under one roof
- Resources provided include assessment, access to computers, employment and job lead databases, employers, job search training and support, and referral to community partners
- Find your local American Job Centers: <https://www.careeronestop.org>

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Programs



Purpose of VR Programs:

To empower individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence, and to realize full inclusion and integration into society.

To achieve this, VR can:

- Provide help with job searching (direct services and other resources including clothing, transportation, supplies, tools, etc.)
- Can provide funds for job specific training or education
- Subcontract with providers for services to specialized populations (e.g. mental health, HIV)
- State VR agencies provide services through local district offices – to find yours, see: <https://askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies>

Ticket to Work Program (SSA)



- The **Ticket to Work** program is a federal program of the Social Security Administration to help SSI and/or SSDI beneficiaries with a disability to achieve their employment goals.
- Services can include: vocational rehabilitation, training, referrals, job coaching, counseling and placement services.
- The Ticket to Work program is voluntary; there is no penalty if an SSI/SSDI beneficiary decides not to participate.
- Social Security will suspend medical [Continuing Disability Reviews](#) (CDRs) while beneficiaries are using their “Ticket”.
- By using the Ticket to Work program, you can access employment services provided by Ticket service providers called Employment Networks (Ens).

Work Incentive Planning & Assistance (WIPA) Projects



- WIPA projects offer community-based **benefits planning and assistance to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries** who are working or interested in working.
- WIPA project counselors, called Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs), provide ongoing, individualized support and information to help beneficiaries plan and navigate transitions to work with knowledge about:
 - the effect of work on financial, health coverage and other benefits
 - when, how, and what to report to Social Security
- A network of 95 WIPA projects provide services throughout every state, DC, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico.
 - Find local WIPA projects: www.choosework.ssa.gov

Getting to Work – An Online Training for HIV Service Providers

- The Getting to Work training curriculum assists service providers in understanding HIV in the context of employment and the different approaches to helping people living with HIV who are considering or pursuing work to identify and achieve self-chosen employment goals.
- Developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of HIV/AIDS Housing.

tinyurl.com/gettingtoworktraining

National Working Positive Coalition



- NWPC is a coalition of people living with HIV, service providers, researchers, employers and advocates who are committed to addressing key social and economic determinants of health by strengthening and increasing responses to employment needs of individuals living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.
- We are a central resource for HIV and employment information, research, capacity building and technical assistance for policymakers, educators and service providers.

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